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DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Military Intelligence Summary

SECTION VIII
LATIN AMERICA (U)

MARCH 1977

~~NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION~~
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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY (MIS) (U)

VOLUME VIII

LATIN AMERICA

DDI-2680-108-77

Information Cutoff Date: 1 October 1976

This publication supersedes
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(DDI-2680-11-76),
which should be destroyed

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This is a Department of Defense Intelligence Document
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Defense Intelligence Agency

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PREFACE

The Military Intelligence Summary (MIS), published in eight volumes, is a synopsis of military intelligence worldwide. Intended to serve as a ready reference, the MIS presents a compilation of intelligence on those forces which contribute to the military security of each country, and on the political and economic factors affecting the country's military capability. Published semiannually, the MIS serves to update information in other DIA publications.

Unless otherwise indicated, the information in Volumes IV and VIII is that available in DIA as of 1 April and 1 October. The data cutoff date for the other volumes is 1 January and 1 July.

Information summarized in the MIS is available in detail in numerous DIA publications. A list of related publications, both completed and scheduled, is published in the Register of Intelligence Publications (DDS-2600-37) and the Defense Intelligence Production Schedule (DP-730-21-75). The Intelligence Users Guide (DDP-2600-397) explains how to obtain finished intelligence products and services from DIA.

Addressees are requested to forward information which will supplement or correct this volume. Questions and comments should be referred in writing to the Defense Intelligence Agency (ATTN: DB-3E), Washington, D.C. 20301.

Page determined to be Unclassified
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IAW EO 13526, Section 3.5
Date: *Oct 17, 2018*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ORIENTATION MAP

ARGENTINA
BOLIVIA
BRAZIL
CHILE
COLOMBIA
CUBA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
ECUADOR
EL SALVADOR
GUATEMALA
GUYANA
HAITI
HONDURAS
JAMAICA
MEXICO
NICARAGUA
PANAMA
PARAGUAY
PERU
URUGUAY
VENEZUELA

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MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

GUATEMALA

A. ~~(C/NOFORN)~~ Political-Military Situation: Guatemala, by its Constitution, is a republic with a popularly elected President and legislature. In reality, the military has exerted considerable influence over the government in recent years, and there are charges by many that the current President, Brigadier General Kjell Laugerud García (Army, Retired), did not win the majority of the popular vote. He was inaugurated President on 1 July 1974 for a four-year term. Although politically inexperienced, President Laugerud has taken tight hold of the reins of government and is proving to be a capable chief of state. For example, after Guatemala suffered a devastating earthquake on 4 February 1976, President Laugerud received much credit and praise for the extremely well organized disaster relief. The reconstruction effort continues and is progressing well.

In mid-1976, the internal political situation in Guatemala became more unstable. Hardline attitudes resurfaced as various parties began planning for the 1978 presidential elections. Moreover, during the past few months there has been a resurgence of terrorist activity by members of the extreme left who have threatened both military personnel and rightwing politicians. So far, it appears that the government is controlling the increased violence without resorting to extralegal police or military suppression techniques. President Laugerud has retained support for his moderate policies, but, in time, may be forced to adopt a more rigid position and a more severe approach to internal security.

On the international scene, President Laugerud has generally supported the United States, although he has been more independent than his predecessors on some questions. U.S.-Guatemalan relations have cooled slightly in 1976, especially because of the U.S. procrastination in arms negotiations and deliveries. Thus, Laugerud and top advisors are turning to Israel, France, Belgium, and other countries for military equipment support.

A major item of Guatemalan national preoccupation is the future independance of Belize (formerly British Honduras), a UK commonwealth dependency for which the Guatemalan government continues to press its claim for sovereignty based on territorial

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exploration by Christopher Columbus and on Spanish colonial government jurisdiction. Tensions with the United Kingdom over Belize, sporadic for many years, increased in the last half of 1975. Guatemala augmented its military strength in the Petén region bordering Belize, and the UK reinforced its defenses in the dependency to discourage any untoward move by Guatemala. Ministerial negotiations over the future of Belize were resumed between the UK and Guatemala in April 1976; the most recent was held in September. As tensions eased, Guatemala withdrew some of its forces and some British troops returned to the United Kingdom during the summer. Then, in October, the British and Guatemalan military forces in Belize and the Petén respectively were again augmented. The Guatemalan Army bases near Belize (Puerto Barrios, Poptun, Santo Tomas de Castilla, and Zacapa) have been kept fully staffed and on a semi-alert status in preparation for a possible armed invasion by Guatemala of Belize. On the surface, both sides have accepted the military buildup, and the next major negotiation is scheduled for early 1977. Guatemalan negotiators have indicated that the government would accept, in principle, the existence of an independent Belize, but they insist upon a cession of territory to Guatemala -- a condition that is unacceptable to the political leadership of Belize. The future of the negotiations is uncertain, and the issue remains a politically explosive one in Guatemala.

Guatemala's armed forces are capable of defending the country against invasion by any of its Central American neighbors. They could conduct successful small-scale operations against El Salvador, Honduras, or--provided British elements were not present--Belize. The armed forces are adversely affected by a topheavy senior officer corps, absence of a career program for NCO's, and obsolete equipment. Officially designated the Army of Guatemala, the armed forces consist almost exclusively of a ground element (popularly called the Guatemalan Army), plus a small Air Force and Navy. The President is titular Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, with control highly centralized under the Minister of Defense, who normally is a senior Army officer. The military establishment theoretically is commanded by the Army Chief of Staff. In practice, however, the Minister of National Defense tends to communicate directly with the Chiefs of the Air Force and Navy. The armed forces are generally pro-West, particularly pro-United States, and have experienced no significant Communist penetration. Their public image, although poor in the past, has been generally improving because of increased professionalism and participation in civic action projects, particularly in disaster relief activities following the February 1976 earthquake.

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Date: Oct 17, 2018

B. (U) Key Military Officials:
President: Kjell Laugerud García (Brig Gen, Army, Ret).
Minister of Foreign Relations: Adolfo Molina Orantes
Minister of National Defense: Brig Gen Fernando Romeo Lucas García (Army)
Army: Chief of Staff, Brig Gen Otto Guillermo Spiegler Noriega
Navy: Chief, Capt José Antonio Contreras Roca
Air Force: Chief, Col Roberto José Francisco Salazar Asturias
National Police: Director General, Col Mario Gustavo Cardona Maldonado

C. (U) Military Budget:
$33,900,000 proposed for fiscal year ending 31 December 1976; 6.7% of the proposed central government budget and about 1.0% of estimated GNP. No service allocation is available. Dollar value converted from quetzals at the exchange rate of one quetzal equals US $1.00.

D. (U) Population and Military Manpower:
Population: 5,934,000 as of 1 July 1976.
Males (ages 15-49): 1,457,000; physically fit, 948,000.
Ethnic Divisions: Indian-41.4%, Ladino*-58.6%
Literacy: about 30%

E. ~~(U)~~ Army:
Personnel Strength: 12,480 (980 officers, 1,545 NCO's, 6,915 privates, 2,470 specialists, and 570 students and cadets). Reserve-35,000, semi-trained.
Major Units: 4 brigades (1 infantry battalion each), 10 separate battalions (5 infantry, 1 airborne infantry, 1 military police, 1 engineer, 1 training, 1 transportation), and 2 separate battalion-equivalent units (Presidential Guard, Mobile Military Police). In addition, there is a 400-man Tactical Group, stationed at La Aurora Air Base for airport security.
Major Equipment: 12 105-mm howitzers, 12 75-mm pack howitzers, 12 106.7-mm (4.2-inch) mortars, 5 M113 and 5 M113A1 armored personnel carriers, 10 RBY Mk. 1 armored personnel carriers (Israel), and 7 Cadillac Gage V-100 armored cars. In addition, items in the inventory of questionable combat effectiveness because of age are 15 M8 and 4 M3A1 armored cars (halftracks, World War II). Seven World War II M3 light tanks are considered so obsolete as to be useless.

*Westernized Indian, mestizo and white.

F. ~~(C)~~ Navy:
Personnel Strength: 500 (40 general service officers, 10 Marine officers, 206 general service enlisted, and 244 enlisted Marines). No reserve.
Ships: 15 patrol boats (PB) (1 32 meter, 2 25.9-meter, 5 19.8-meter, 1 19.2-meter, 2 12.2-meter, 2 11-meter, 2 8.5-meter), 1 mechanized landing craft (LCM), 1 floating workshop (YR). Total inventory: 17.
Units: The Navy is a small patrol force, with two naval bases (one on the Caribbean and one on the Pacific Coast) and one Marine Company of five platoons (four platoons on the Caribbean; one platoon on the Pacific Coast).

G. ~~(C)~~ Air Force: Personnel strength: 375 (75 officers, 300 enlisted), including 60 pilots. No reserve.
Units: 4 squadrons (1 fighter, 1 transport, 1 helicopter, and 1 maintenance).
Aircraft: 55: 13 jet (11 A-37B fighters, 2 T-33 trainers); 9 turboprop (transports- 8 ARAVAS, 1 C-12 Super King Air); 20 prop (10 transports- 1 DC-6B, 9 C-47s; 4 utility- 3 Cessna 206's, 1 Cessna 180; 6 trainers- Cessna 172): 13 heli (utility- 9 UH-1H, 3 ALOUETTE III, 1 LAMA).

H. ~~(C)~~ Paramilitary: None. The civil police consist of two distinct agencies, both subordinate to the Ministry of Government (Interior). Personnel strength: National Police-5,570; Treasury Police-1,058.

I. (U) Key US Officials (all in Guatemala City except as indicated):
Chief of Mission: Ambassador David E. Boster
Chief, AID Mission: Edward A. Coy
Defense Attaché and Army Attaché: Col John F. Hook
Naval Attaché (Mexico City): Capt Eddie F. Best
Air Attaché (Tegucigalpa): Col Delmore L. Fessenden
MILGP Commander and Chief, Army Section: Col Charles D. Corbett
Chief, Navy Section: Cdr William S. Brown, Jr.
Chief, Air Force Section: Lt Col Jerold Eustace

J. (U) Foreign Military Presence: There are Israelis in Guatemala training Guatemalan Air Force personnel on maintenance of the ARAVA aircraft. It is not known whether these advisors are civilian or military personnel.

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